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ABSTRACT

Focusing on writing as a language process, this booklet describes a framework for writing instruction that has as a major consideration the totality of language. The first section discusses writing as a language process, emphasizing that as children learn to write, they can also learn to listen, speak, and read. The second section focuses on the learner, discussing the varied linguistic experiences and skills that children have when they enter elementary school and emphasizing the importance of immediate student involvement in the planning of class activities. The third section addresses the teacher's role in helping students learn to write, and suggests that teachers interact with the children, motivating them by acting as role models, resource persons, program planners, and environment arrangers. The final section considers the factors involved in designing an environment for writing and language development: (1) planning the physical set-up; (2) making print available in the classroom, such as a calendar or a bulletin board; (3) providing needed supplies and equipment; (4) scheduling; (5) designing activities to start children writing, including notes and letters, labels, journals, class books, "if" books, story writing, and bookmaking; (6) teaching techniques, including support, dictation, and written conversation; and (7) planning evaluation. (Children's illustrations and writing samples are included.) (JD)

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Young Children Write: The Beginnings

Vera E. Milz

Way Elementary School

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

February, 1982 No. 5

Occasional Papers
Program in Language and Literacy
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YOUNG CHILDREN CAN WRITE: THE BEGINNINGS

Vera E. Milz
Way Elementary School
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Art by Children of Room 14

Adult Art-George Hemingway

October 1980
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Statement of Purpose

This series of working papers will provide a report of our current thinking and make available the work of our program to those who may be interested. It is our intent to stimulate an on-going dialogue with other professionals who share similar interests in educational theory and practice. We welcome responses from readers. Comments may be directed to the author of the paper or to the directors of the program.

Some but not all of the papers may appear in other publications in modified form. We are making this publication available at cost.

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Introduction

A group of children and I shape the learning that takes place within the walls of Room 14. Language, in its forms of listening, speaking, reading and writing, allows us to communicate and interact with each other as it permeates every classroom activity. Although the focus of this booklet is the subject of **writing**, it is well to keep in mind that it is the totality of language that must be a major consideration as one creates an instructional framework for the encouragement of writing. It is my belief that writing is one component of a total program that has language development as its foremost objective. Listening, speaking, and reading are closely related and integrated as the child learns to write.

Vera Milz

Room 14

The group of children changes each school year. Sometimes, they have been all first graders--at other times the room has been used for a first/second grade combination class. The children themselves reflect diverse ethnic origins, varying abilities, multi-interests and experiences--typical of the differences found in normal children. Several have been unable to speak English upon entry though they were proficient in their native languages. One child had physical handicaps and several children were labeled learning disabled. Their differences were not deficiencies as each child brought the richness of their personal background along with their needs. It is the children who are the heart of the classroom.

As I share my observations and conclusions based on my experiences as their teacher, I hope you will reflect and consider as well as gain insights which will be of help as you plan for children within your own classrooms.

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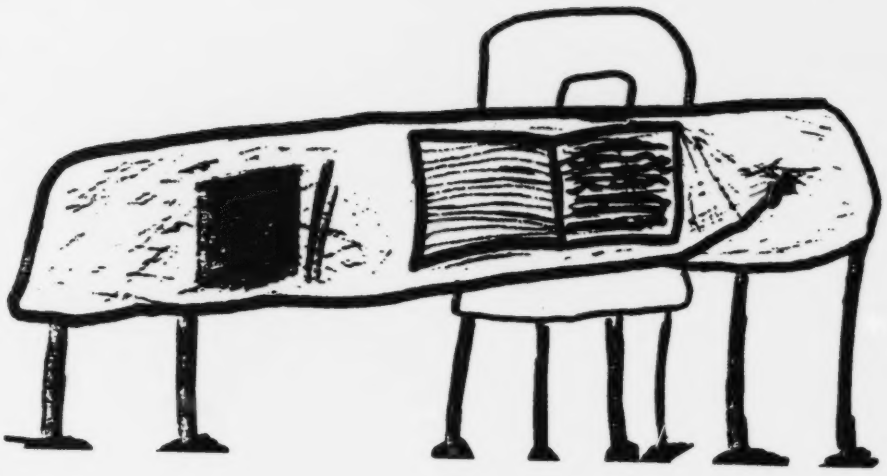
SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT WRITING AS A LANGUAGE PROCESS

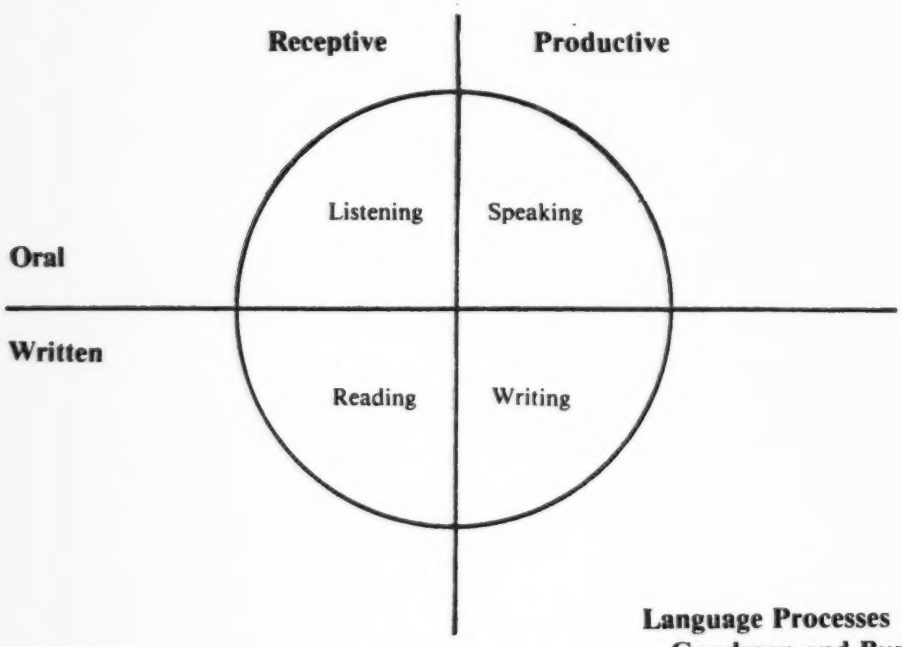
"Language development is natural whether written or oral. It develops in a social setting because of the human need to communicate and interact with the significant others in the culture."

—Yetta Goodman



Being able to write in a meaningful way is an ability highly prized in our society. Writing is an essential means of communication in a print-oriented world such as we live in. Writing is a complex, very personal process learned by each of us as individuals--yet it is not learned in a vacuum, but in a social community. Thus, the teaching of writing becomes a societal concern shared by schools, parents, and the community at large as interactions take place between the learner and their world.

Learning how to write is rooted in the way that human beings learn language. Language is both oral and written, and has receptive and productive qualities:



Language Processes
—Goodman and Burke

Listening and speaking are oral language while reading and writing are the written forms. It is the totality of language that is of utmost importance for it is through language that communication takes place. As children are learning to write, they are also learning to listen, speak and read. These processes are inter-related and integrated within the language user. As children feel the need to communicate on a daily basis, language development is taking place.

As language serves a legitimate function in the lives of children and adults, it grows because of what it has to do. Research in oral language development has shown how children learn to speak without formal instruction. M.A.K. Halliday says:

> "The child knows what language is because he knows what language does."

Likewise children can learn to write as they express themselves in a journal, write a note, order an item, or create an imaginative story or poem. Children can learn to write in the same holistic way as they once learned to speak if the following principles are considered as teachers choose materials and plan classroom learning activities.

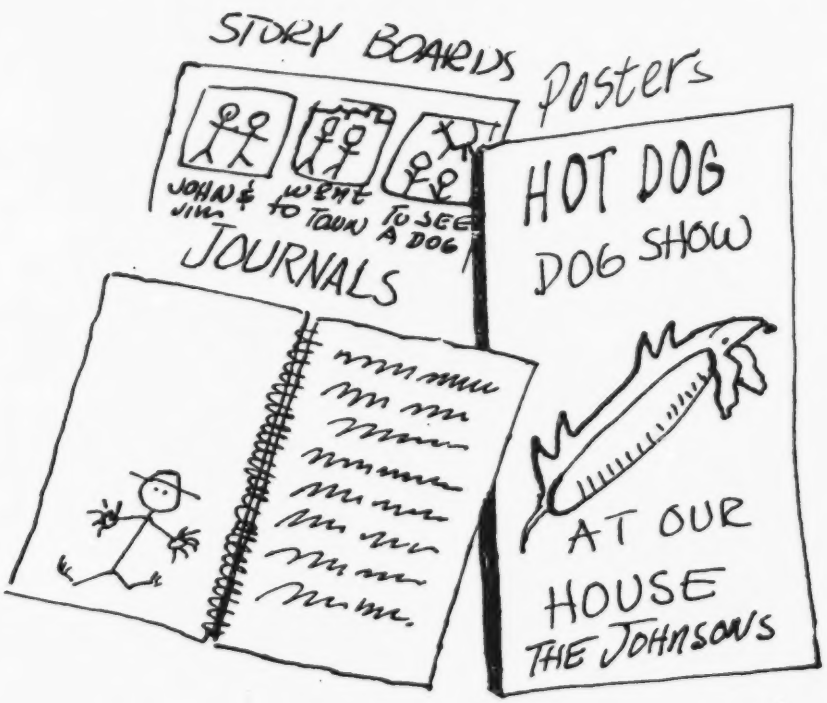
1. Writing is learned through use.

2. Children need to use and see the use of writing in many varied ways.

3. Writing must be functional at the time of learning if it is to be meaningful to the learner.

4. Writing develops both in and out of school if a literate environment surrounds the learner.

5. Writing develops at different rates within individual children of the same age.



THE LEARNER

We cannot assume a child must approach reading and writing as an untrained animal approaches a maze — with no discernible prior conception of its structure.

Charles Reed

WHAT KIDS BRING TO SCHOOL

As children enter elementary school they bring many linguistic strengths reflecting their background and experiences. They may appear to be very different in their language facility, but all are already competent language users that have mastered enough of their home language to be able to talk with adults and peers. No one has "taught" them deliberately. Languaging is a natural process as children are surrounded by meaningful functional language from birth. Their early attempts to speak are rewarded by the attention and encouragement of adults and other care givers. This interaction encourages the child to keep on trying. An example of this took place while I was visiting in my neighbor's backyard:

One-year-old Scott and his Mom were with me in their backyard when Dad needed help in the house. As Mom hurried in and asked me to watch Scott, he looked concerned and started to follow her. When the screen door closed, he looked perplexed. After a few moments, he called, "MA". She responded, "I'm right here, Scott." He babbled for a few moments as his mom called back to him. He then returned to his play by me, confident that Mom was not too far away.

At this early age, Scott is understanding language, but is not able to fully produce it.

When children hear language used around them, they want to use language to express their own thoughts and ideas. Later they begin to notice certain features, such as the way past tenses are formed by adding **ed**, or how plurals are formed by adding **s**:

Over-generalizations, such as these, are part of language learning, and give observers evidence that language is developing, and that the child is **learning how** to use it to express her/his thoughts.

Slobin says,
"One cannot help but be impressed with the child's great propensity to generalize, to analogize, to look for regularities — in short to seek and create order in his language.

In a literate society such as ours, children are surrounded by print in their home and neighborhood. There is a growing awareness of written language in its forms of reading and writing. Children begin to tell Daddy to stop the car as they approach a STOP sign. They may get excited and say EAT as they come to a McDonalds where they have had good things to eat previously.

They also become aware of the use of writing. Marie Clay notes:

> "Somewhere between three and five years most children in a literate culture become aware that people make marks on paper purposefully."

As the appropriate occasion arises, children often begin to write though their early efforts may bear little resemblance to adult writing. It may even pass un-noticed by parents and other caregivers:

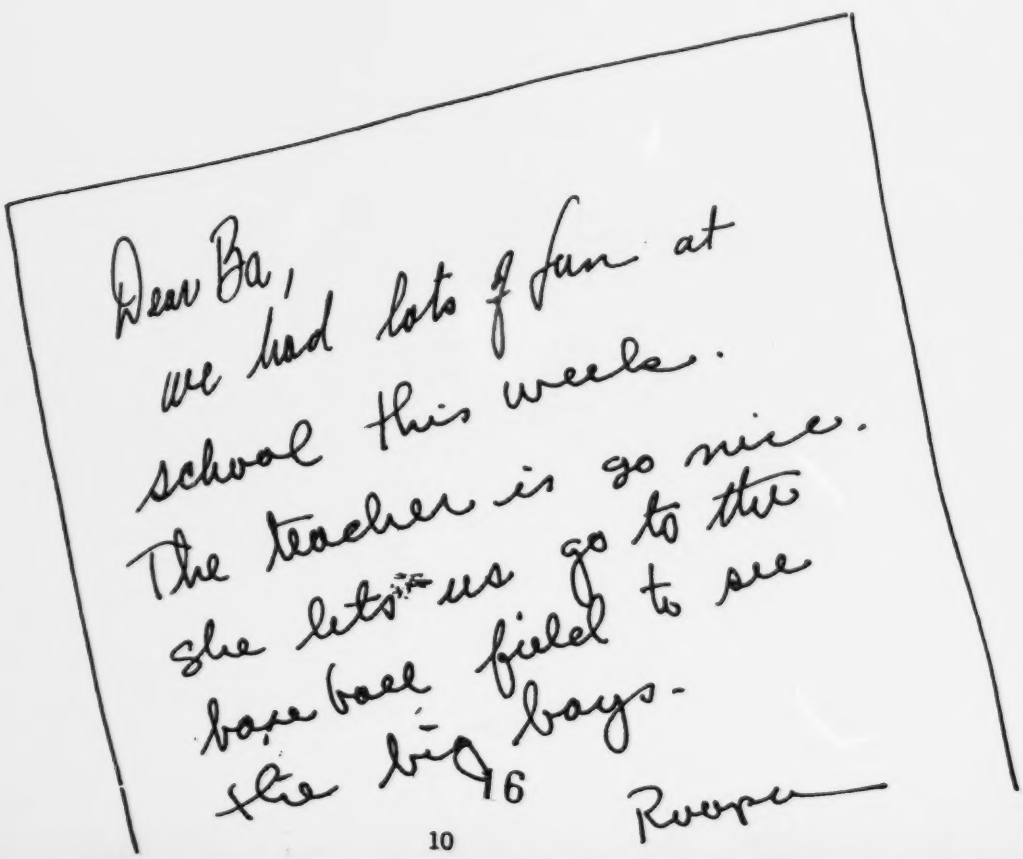
> Paul, at three years of age, was busy drawing the following picture at home. He attended nursery school school where his teacher would label his pictures and possessions. As one looks at this drawing, there is evidence that Paul was already assuming this responsibility for himself:

Amy, another three-year-old, became very indignant as her teacher began to manuscript her name on one corner of her drawing. She stated:

"It gots my name,"

as she pointed to several wobbly lines present on her picture.

Roopa, aged 2½, comes from a home which has grandparents and other relatives living in England. As her mother writes to them, Roopa often encloses her own notes. One day, she eagerly answered the phone before her parents could reach it. As her mother came to the phone, Roopa said, "It's Dear Ba." Roopa is getting to know her grandmother through the medium of letters. It was unusual to be able to communicate orally as she was now able to do, and she responded with her more familiar use of written language.



The writing of pre-schoolers has been a recent focus of many researchers (Charles Reed, Carol Chomsky, Marie Clay, Glenda Bissex, etc. (As they observed children, they note that children exhibit certain features in their early writing once they move beyond scribbling and random letter formation.

Carol Chomsky says,

"They just use letters according to their names or sounds, putting down words as they hear them, and in the process, carrying out a splendid phonetic analysis. Their spellings are surprisingly uniform from child to child."

They have observed the following in various child written examples:

1. Scribbling Stage
2. Use of consonants
   KATE = KT
3. Long or tense vowels added
   LIKE = LIK
   LADY = LADE
4. Short or lax vowels are added based on articulation awareness, phonological relationships.
   PEN = PAN
   IT = ET
   WET = WAT
5. Pre-consonatal nasals are omitted.
   BUMP = BP
   WENT = WET
6. Children are content to use homographs to represent various words.
   name = name or ENEMY

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Charles Read notes:

> "What the children do not know is the set of lexical representations and the system of phonologival rules that account for much standard spelling; what they do know is a system of phonetic relationships that have not been taught by their parents or teachers."

All these researchers conclude that pre-schoolers categorize sounds as they invent their own spellings prior to formal instruction. They construct words, hypothesize, revise rules, and are very systematic and logical in their approach to spelling.

Each of these kinds of pre-school experiences that children may have help them to gain insights into how written language works. As teachers interact with learners entering school, they can discover individual strengths that children bring, so that they can understand these beginnings, and expand the language base the child has.

An informed teacher should expect that seemingly bizarre spelling may represent a system of abstract phonological relations of which adults are quite unaware. Until we understand this system better, we can at leasts respect it and attempt to work with it, if only intuitively.

—Charles Read

AT
SCHOOL ENTRY

Children are active eager participants in the learning process. As they enter school, their curiosity and enthusiasm are readily apparent. It is important that they be involved in the planning of learning activities for the classroom. Right from the beginning they can assume responsibility in planning the school day and can be the source of ideas for determining subjects the class wishes to learn more about. As children learn their ideas are encouraged, they will grow in independent thinking. Donald Graves believes this process will have an effect on the writing of students. He found that:

> "Children wrote longer when writing about their own choices of topics and events."

Evaluation sessions during and at the end of the school day provide each child with the opportunity to assess their experiences and be a participant in making tomorrow an even better day!

As children begin formal schooling, they come with varied experience and linguistic backgrounds. Any two learners may be quite different. Ted and Vikki shared an August birthday. In one year, Ted wrote 2745 words while Vikki wrote 7089. Ted used all capital letters and invented spellings as he generated writing, while Vikki used appropriate lower case/capital letters and conventional spellings.

See examples:

Their writing facility was very different, yet both shared a need to communicate and interact. It is not appropriate for children to be given the same assignment and time allowance for completion, or to expect them to proceed at the same reate. Instead, individual programs must be designed if children are expected to grow and develop into competent writers.

THE TEACHER

Good teachers have always been KID WATCHERS —

Yetta Goodman

The teacher's role in helping children to write is a very important one. Attitudes, beliefs and actions shape the way that students feel about writing. The children in my classroom today write more and sooner than children in previous years. I am sure that my expanding interest and knowledge coupled with my actions has had an effect on the children that I teach.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO?

BE ADULTS INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN-NOT LECTURERS DEMANDING A PASSIVE AUDIENCE.

Although I work with whole groups of children at once, especially when reading to my class, the majority of my time is spent working with small groups or individuals.

I respond to their writing. Children who write notes to me receive answers. As they write in journals, children know that I will read and often respond in writing to the meaning of what they write.

BE OBSERVERS STILL LEARNING ABOUT CHILDREN

Many times I have asked children to explain why they are doing something. There is a big difference between the experiences and logic of a child and that of an adult. Glenda Bissex found a sign that her son had posted:

DO NAT DSTRB GNYS AT WRK

She commented, "The genius at work is our human capacity for language. Do not disturb is a caution to observe how it works, for the logic by which we teach is not always the "lkgic" by which children learn." Her son is one of her best teachers. He has told her, "I WILL TECH U TO RIT AD THESE EZ HAOW U RIT" as he has written a message to her. My students have done the same for me. As I monitor their progress and begin to understand what they are doing, I can build on strengths and help with difficulties.

PROVIDE ROLE MODELS

As one who loves to read, it is easy to share my experiences with books with my students. This same feeling towards writing has developed. My class knows the excitement I have as I participate in a writing experience.

As children write to penpals, I write to their penpal's teacher. Often I contribute a page to a classroom book. Writing is as much a part of my daily life as I expect it to be in my students.

BE A MOTIVATOR AND AN ENCOURAGER

To do that, just ask children to be themselves. By this, I mean that I want them to write like six or seven-year olds. Once children try, they allow themselves to build on fragile beginnings. As they write their first independent words, I respond with the same excitement as a mother watching her baby take that first step, or say a first word.

Charles Read has a statement to explain why some children write, and others do not. I would like to consider its message as applicable to the classroom:

"Possibly the most important parental contribution was that even though some of them worried about the development of bad spelling, all of the parents accepted the child's spelling as a creative production and offered adult spelling only when the child asked for it."

SERVE AS A RESOURCE PERSON, ENVIRONMENT ARRANGER, AND PROGRAM PLANNER

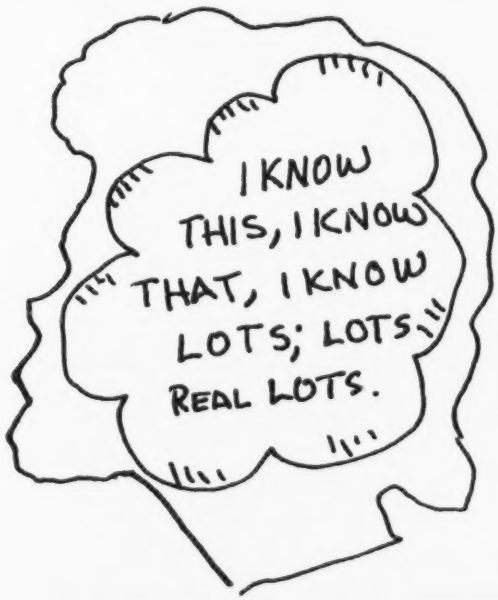
Bringing in story books, setting up a trip, talking to the school nurse about a heart model, etc., are a few of the many things which I do to stimulate learning in the classroom. As I discover interests, likes and dislikes, I can determine what is needed to further enhance their development. Children need successful experiences and to see themselves as able learners. They also need to be challenged to reach out and grow. Teachers can provide the support and leadership to help students grow.

Teachers can be sure that time is allowed for children to think and comprehend. The day need not be so tightly controlled that the child moves from one teacher-directed activity to another.

DESIGNING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR WRITING
(and language development)

Writing, as one of many tasks in a busy school day, typically is not connected to anything or anyone else in the lives of students or teacher. If this is true, then "letting children write" may amount to far more than pedogogical laissez faire. The teaching of writing may requie vigilant attention to the learning environments in which writing occurs to insure that written expression is motivated and that it goes somewhere.

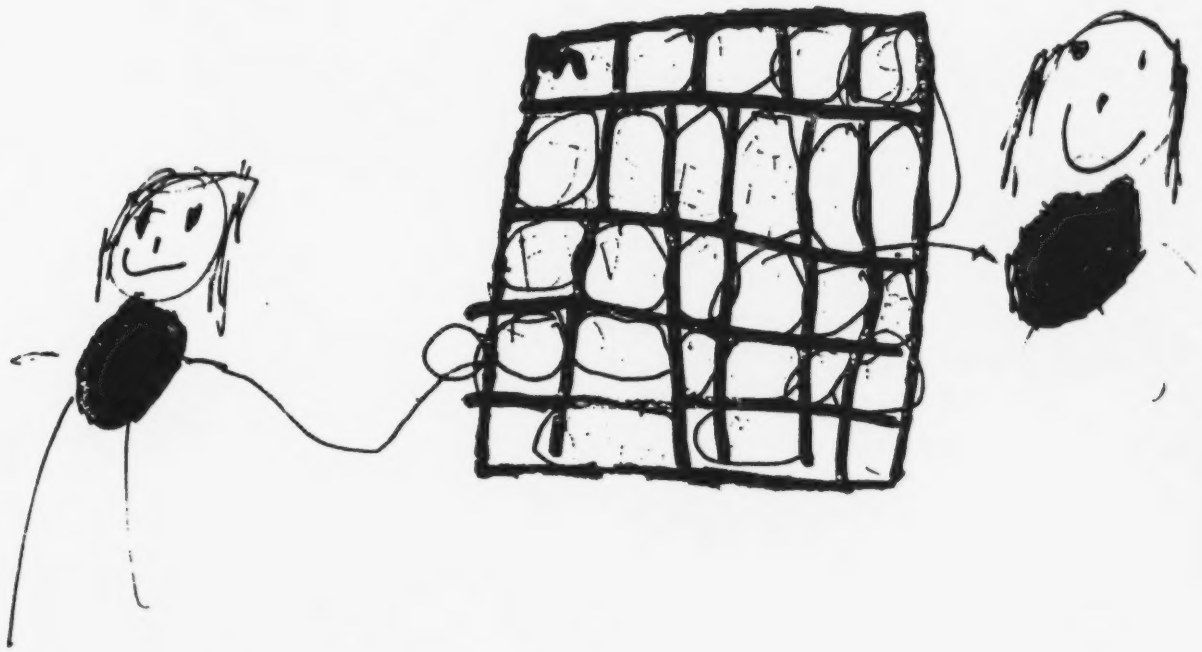
—Susan Florio



I think you should learn, of course, and some days you must learn a great deal. But you should also have days where you allow what is already in you to swell up inside of you until it touches everything. And you can feel it inside you. If you never take time out to let that happen you just accumulate facts, and they begin to rattle around inside of you.

Mrs. Basis E. Frankweiler—
from "The Mixed-up Files..."
by E.L. Konigsburg

I Like Puting
Mail in miss Mills
Mail Box.

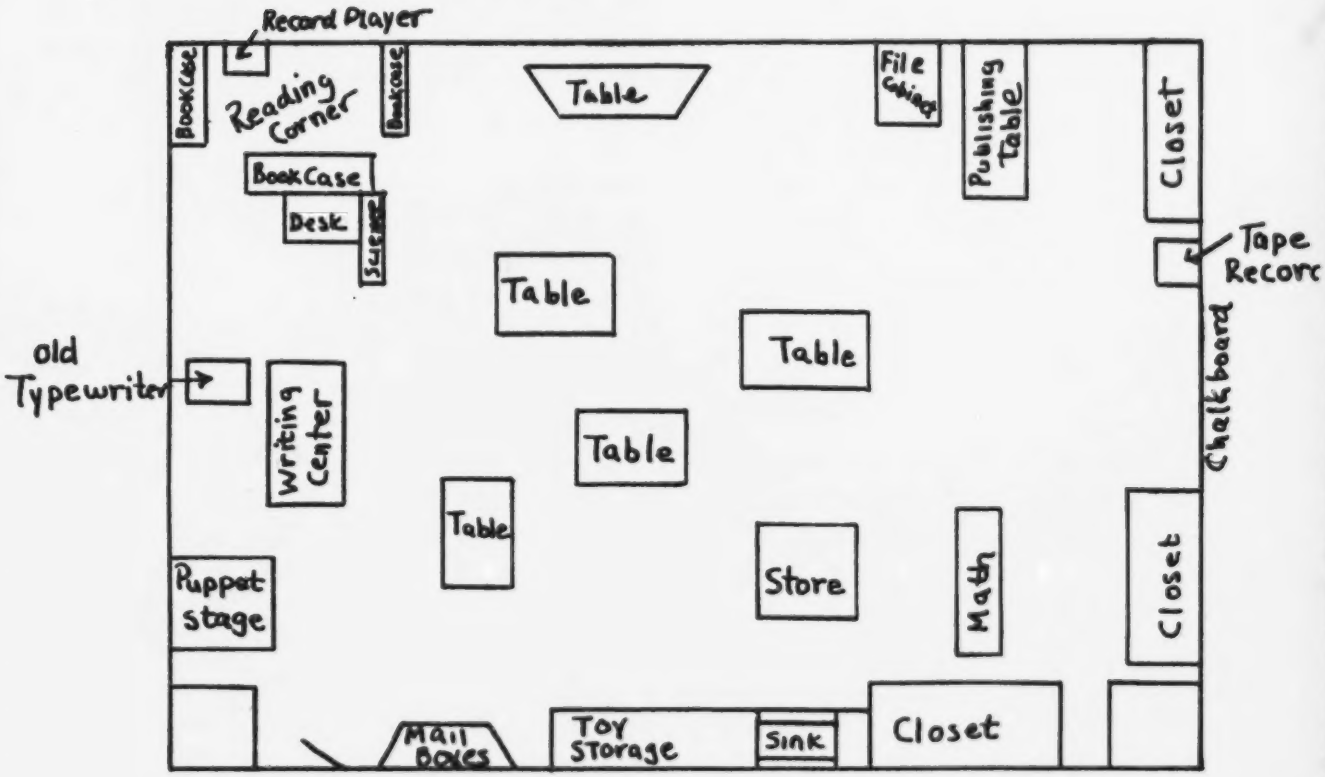


By Suzie

PHYSICAL SET-UP

Traditionally most classrooms come equipped with several walls, assorted desks and tables, various bookcases and storage areas, chalk and bulletin boards. My classroom has all of these components along with a standard ABC chart to be stretched across the front of the room. Making that physical area a place where children are able to become literate is my first asssignment.

This is a floor plan of my classroom:



PRINT IN THE CLASSROOM

If children are to become literate, print must be available and children must be able to use it. Within the classroom environment, print is found everywhere:

CALENDAR Several professionally-made calendars are hung in the room. One calendar has hooks and cards which can be changed monthly. Children can write on the cards and record special trips and happenings, birthdays and days off.

CHALKBOARD The date is recorded along with relevant news items brought in by the teacher and class.

SIGNS Various types of signs hang in the room. A set of outdoor traffic signs are taped to one wall. A toy town set allows children to drive a car through imaginary streets.

BULLETIN BOARDS During the year the class writes to various people. As answers are received, these letters are placed on one bulletin board for children to remove and read as they wish.

One bulletin board is used to list all the class birthdays, along with names and pictures.

Another board has been used to advertise books for other children to read. These may be professional or child-authored stories.

CHARTS My students ride school buses of which there are six routes. Each child's name is listed on a chart to remind them of the bus to be taken home.

LABELS Supply cans, mailboxes, coathooks, etc. all bear the children's names. In addition, labels are made to note simple directions:

Put lunch boxes here..

No paper towels here.
Go to the bathroom if you need some.

PUBLISHED MATERIALS Magazines, comics, 2000 trade books, assorted textbooks and newspapers are found in the classroom.

The trade books are kept in alphabetical order, except for books beginning with **A** and **The**. Examples of this are:

Apron On, Apron Off goes in **A** while *A Big Ball of String* goes in **B**. *The Clown of God* goes in **C** where as *Through Grandpa's Eyes* is placed in **T**. The books are not alphabetized beyond the first letter of the title.

STUDENT AUTHORED BOOKS Shelves in the Writing Center hold books written by the class. These books are kept there for the month the books are written, and the next month. For example, a book written on March 10 will go home on May 1. Often children duplicate pictures, and a copy is typed by the teacher or a volunteer to remain permanently in the classroom.

STORE Signs announcing sales hang on the walls of a carton-box store. Products inside were collected by the children in the classroom as mothers discarded the packages of family food items.

For children there must be a reason for writing; they must become eager and excited enough to want to write

—Clegg

NEEDED EQUIPMENT TOOLS OF THE TRADE

CHILDREN LEARN TO WRITE BY WRITING. As they live in a leterate environment, they will very naturally want to write. In order to do this, some equipment is required for children to be able to write. If materials are readily accessible, children can learn to get the items they need.

The following items are useful to writers:

PAPER

Any type will do. It's a good idea to have many kinds available to accomodate different children's preferences at a given time. I keep lined and unlined paper, narrow and wider-spaced lined paper, plain white and colored paper available in various drawers.

CARDBOARD

Index cards, oaktag, posterboard, and cut-up boxes make good signs, which are sturdy when hung up by children

MEMOS AND STATIONERY

Notepaper and memos can be dittoed and made available near the mailbox area. See samples.

NOTEBOOKS

Most schools hve spiral notebooks. These books provide more permanence for child's work and are very useful journals. Young writers may not be able to use the narrow spaced lines, and may choose to use several spaces. They may also like to draw on the pages.

IMPLEMENTS

Pencils, both black and colored, allow children to record and erase if they change their minds. Crayons and thin markers are more permanent, but allow more color possibilities.

Staplers, Scotch tape, and scissors allow children to construct booklers.

CHALKBOARD AND CHALK

If a space is made available for children to write, they will make use of the chalkboard to communicate to their classmates and teacher.

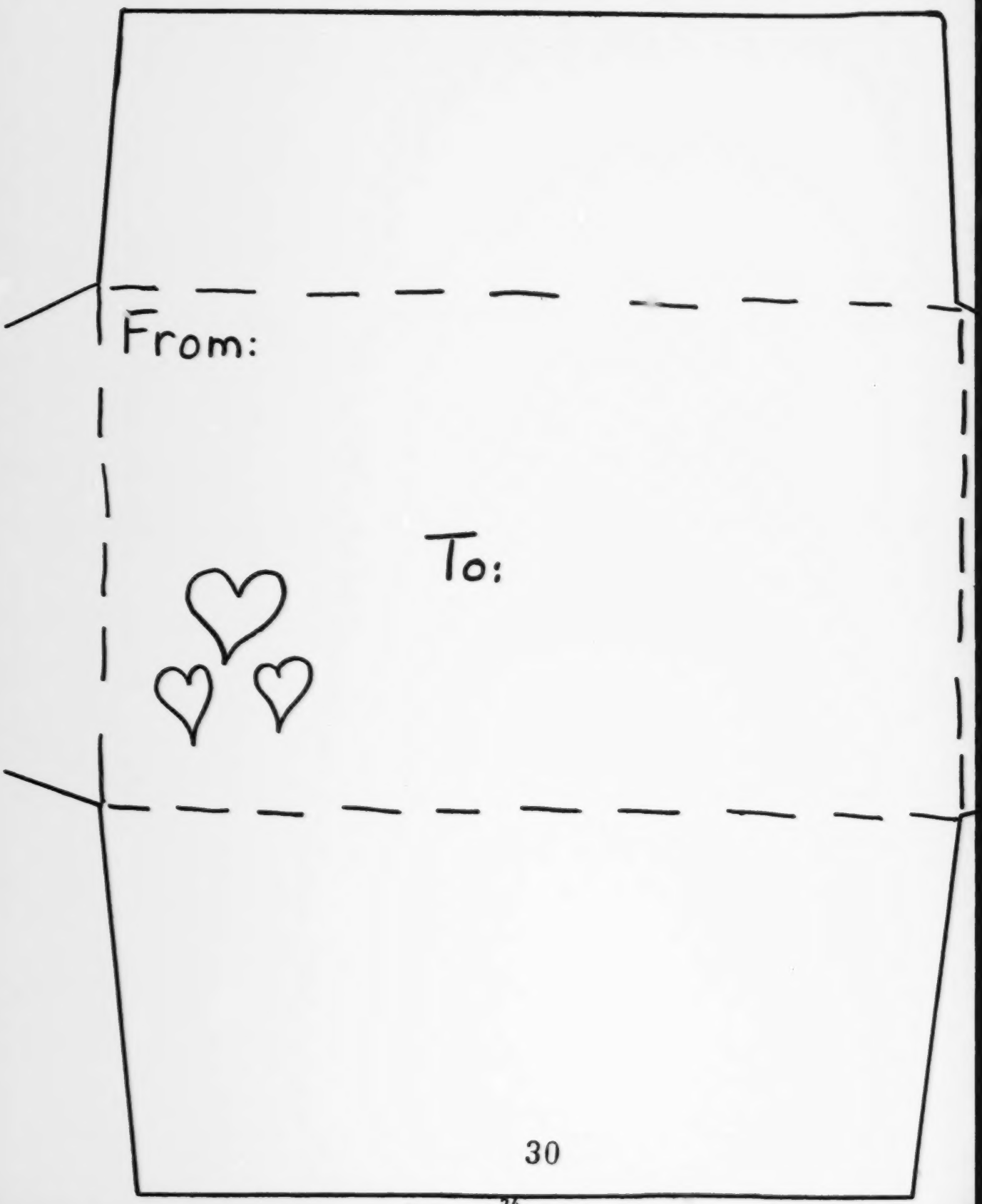
TYPEWRITER

I was able to get an old typewriter in my classroom. It has proven to be a valuable tool in getting children to write. Often children with less small muscle development than others will find writing by hand to be a laborious process, while using the typewriter goes much faster.

ALPHABET STAMPS-LABEL MAKER-PLASTIC LETTERS

Using a rubber stamp, young children can easily spell out words and sentences. Plastic letters serve the same purpose and often can be used on a magnetized chalkboard or other metal areas. A label maker is very useful though the tape is somewhat expensive

Sample Stationery: Change the pictures as needed



Sample Memo Paper

To:_____

From:_____

Message:

To:_____

From:_____

Message:

To:_____

From:_____

Messge:

To:_____

From:_____

Messge:

SCHEDULING
(WHAT HAPPENS)

Now that the young writer has a workshop with supplies, a lot begins to happen. My classroom has been described as having a "flow." Learning to write is not locked into a half-hour time period, just as living is not locked into compact little time units. Instead, writing--along with reading, listening, and speaking occur naturally and spontaneously all day long. Children are languaging as they need to when it fills a particular purpose.

Each year my schedule varies. The following one was used in 1979/80:

Time Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:10-9:30	Opening — Plans for the day →				
9:30-10:30					
9:30-10:30	Mrs. P.	Art 9:20-10:20		Mrs. O.	Mrs. S.
10:30-10:45	Recess →				
10:45-11:30				Music 10:45-11:15	Music
				Library	
11:30-12:30	Lunch and Recess →				
12:30-2:30	1-2:00 Mrs. J.	Gym 1:00-1:30	Math Lab Mrs. F & Mrs. A.	Gym 1:00-1:30	Gym 1:00-1:30
2:30-3:00	Recess →				
3:00-3:30	Clean-up.				
3:30-3:40	Dismissal →				

The time periods where parents are listed as used only for individual or small group activities. The other time periods are available for total group work, such as reading to the class, showing a movie, or other projects.

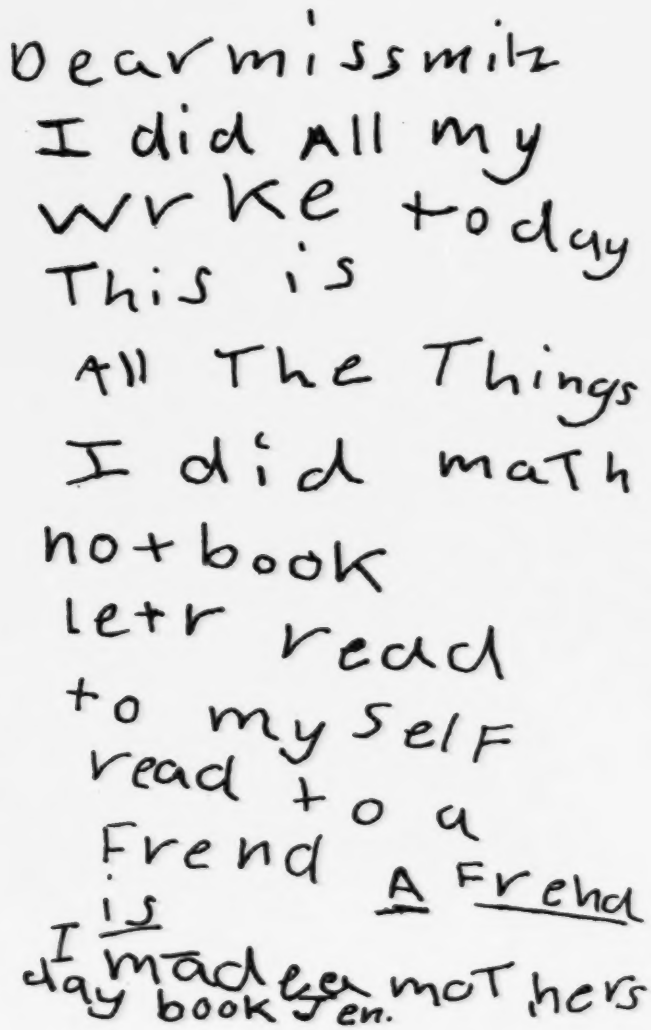
To make this schedule come to life, the following vignette describes what happens during a work period:

Children enter Room 14 at the signal of the 9 o'clock bell. They go to different areas in the room to pick up supplies to begin or continue various projects. One child writes **December 10** on the chalkboard along with the words. **Charlie Brown is on TV tonite.** Several children go to a file drawer to take out notebooks. Others begin to read. The final bell rings at 9:10, and shortly afterward, the teacher calls the class to the front of the room to take attendance and the lunch count. Time is allowed to share various news and personal information. Then the day's plans are discussed, and a brief schedule is listed on the board. An art project is briefly explained. The teacher has a newly completed classbook to read to the group, and children are encouraged to continue to add ideas. Other suggestions are made for writing or reading activities. The children are gradually dismissed to work in the classroom as they name what they plan to be working on. A mother aide comes at 9:30 to listen to children read. Soon the class is working on assorted projects around the room.

Matt is making a poster with an animal picture he cut from a magazine. He prints words underneath--sometimes writing independently, sometimes going to other resources to get information about words he needs. Stories are appearing in journals as well as in blank books. Jenny places her story in a box so that it will be published in a typed book. Travis is reading to Jean. He follows the classbook words as she reads, then reads a page on his own. He is a child learning English since his arrival in September. Vikki puts a note in the teacher's box, and checks her own to see if she has received any mail. Brian listens to a tape recording made by Bill Martin to accompany his Instant Readers book series. The teacher discusses a rough draft of a story with Ted, and then calls Caroline over for a Reading Conference. Alice and Regina read favorite stories to each other.

As an observer looks across the room, children are reading, writing, constructing, discussing, and listening. They work independently and busily on many things. At times, they are called together as a total group, or leave the room for special classes/recess, but each time they return to on-going projects. As one is finished, new ones are started. Children appear to be self-directed, and involved in chosing learning activities. Writing is not isolated and done by the total class, but it is happening across the room.

A CHILD'S DESCRIPTION OF HER DAY IN ROOM 14

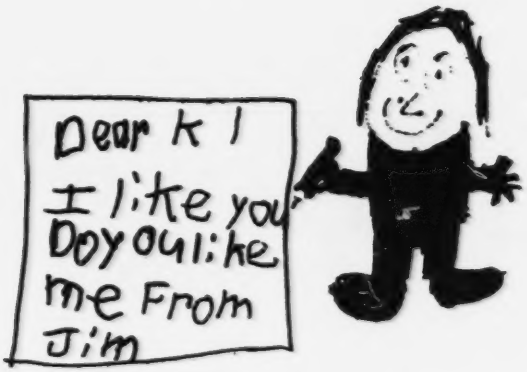


HOW DO THEY GET THIS WAY-

ACTIVITIES TO START KIDS WRITING

The children write about things they know in their environment and things in which they are truly interested.

— Carol Chomsky



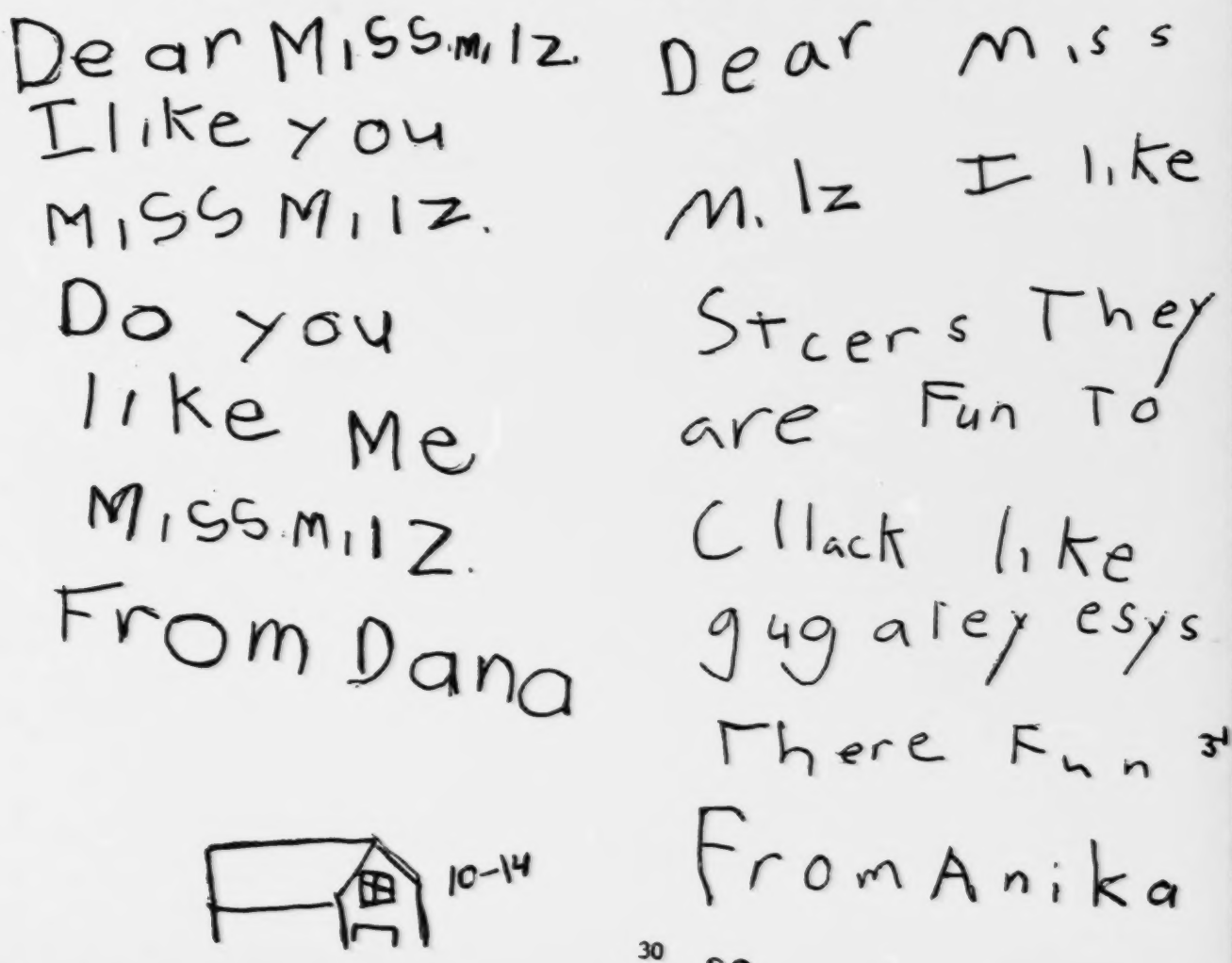
NOTES AND LETTERS

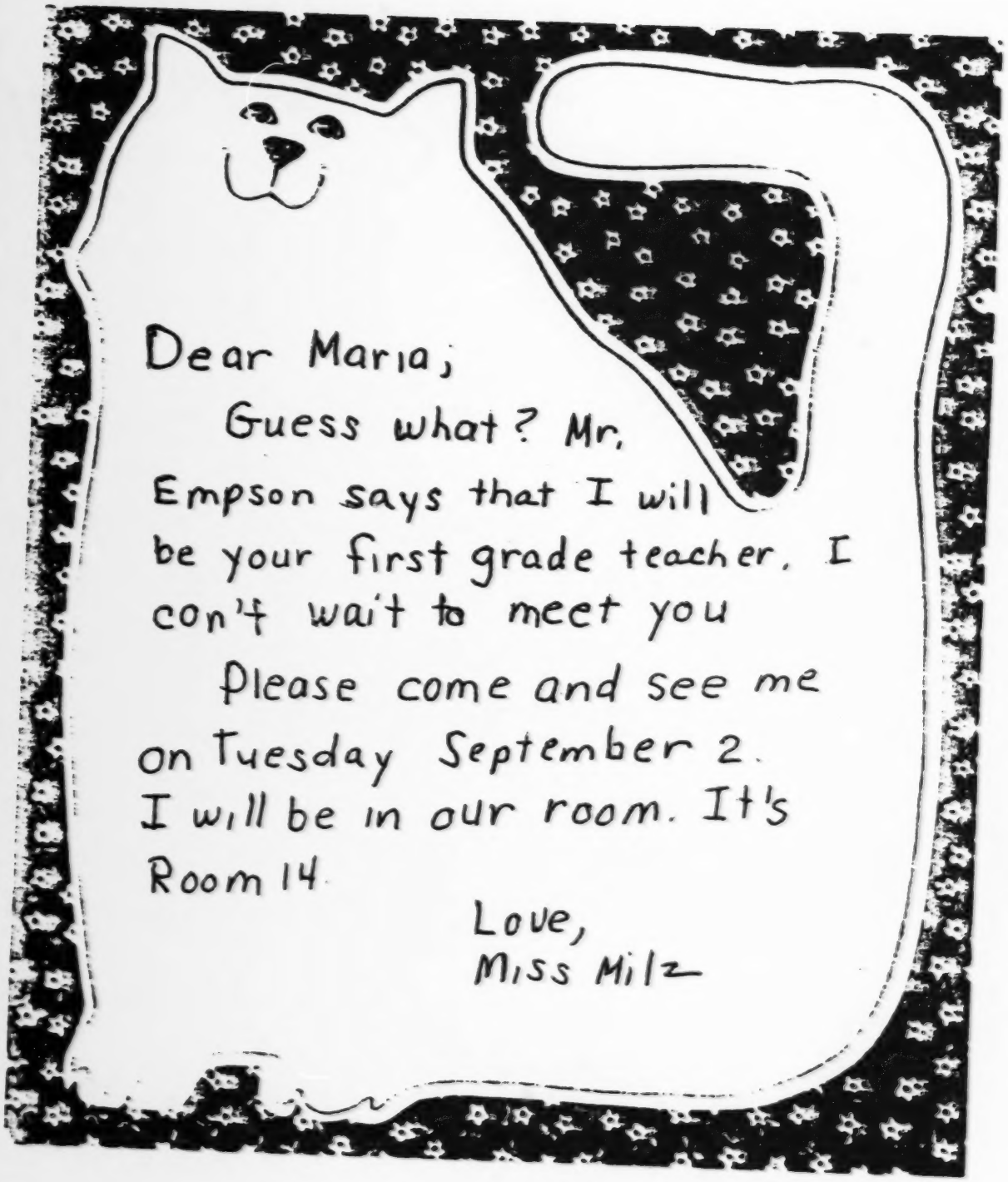
As soon as the class members are identified, a letter is sent to each home inviting the children to stop by on the Teacher Preparation Day beforee school begins.

Many parents come in with their children. As I show them around their new classroom, I show them their mailbox. In it, I have placed another note from me. I, also, show them my mailbox, and tell them that I like to receive notes during the day from them. Sometimes I am too busy to talk and this is a chance for them to tell me things before they are forgotten.

Usually by the first actual school day several children are writing notes back to me. This note writing extends through the whole school year.

Gradually, the children begin to write to peers and parents. If the opportunity arises, they also begin to write to penpals. Through their note writing experiences, they learn that print communicates a message.




Dear Maria,
Guess what? Mr. Empson says that I will be your first grade teacher. I con't wait to meet you
Please come and see me on Tuesday September 2. I will be in our room. It's Room 14.
Love,
Miss Milz

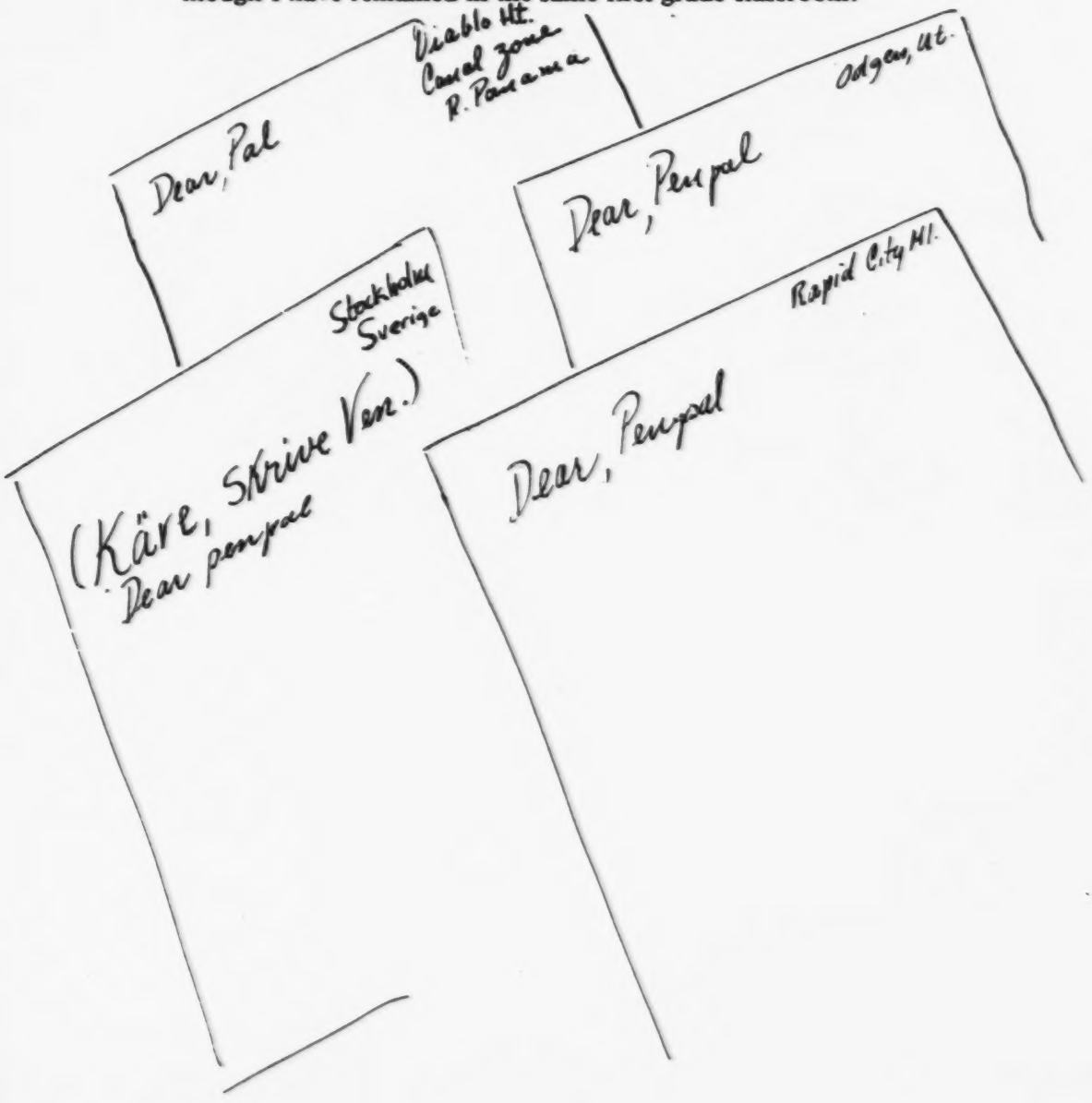
Parents can provide valuable assistance in helping their children to begin to read and write. I suggest that they include a note in their child's lunchbox. Children respond naturally by writing notes for their parents to find.

Dear Scott,
I Love you.

Love,
Mom

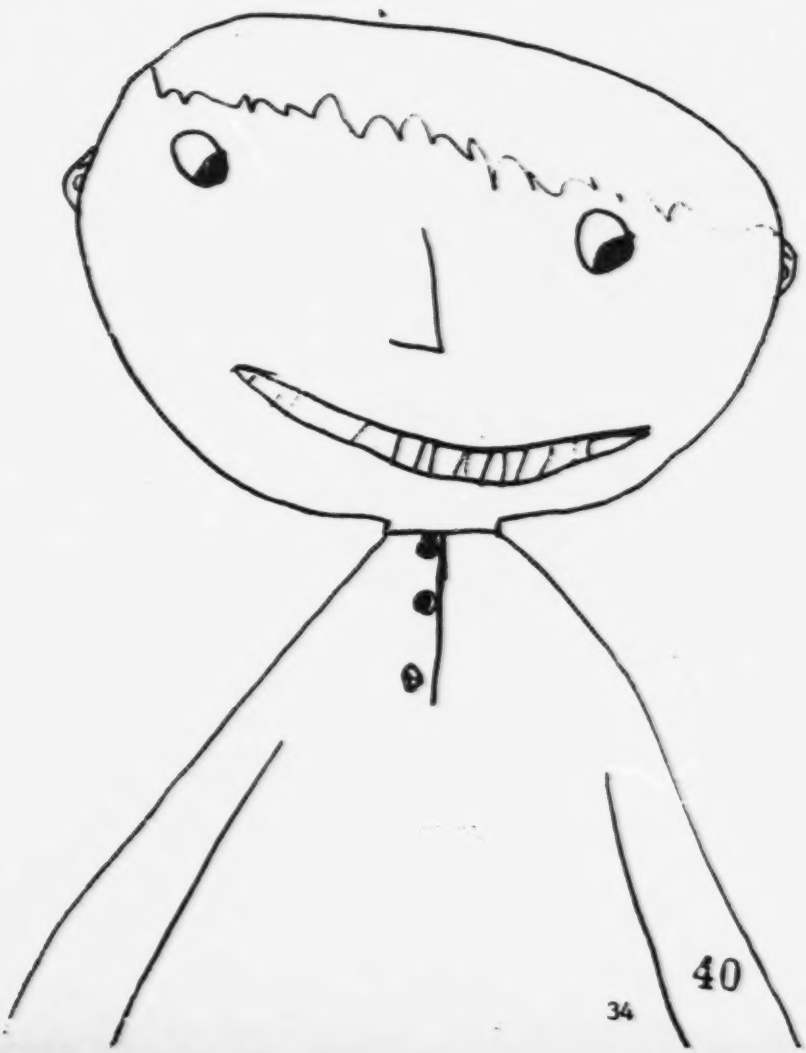
To get penpals, children make an introductory letter about themselves I duplicated these, and sent them to several possible classes. Rather than having the children write 3 or 4 letters of a similar type.

Penpals have never been difficult for me to find. One source has been to use language arts students in a university teacher education program. As I have attended teacher conferences, I have usually found other interested teachers, and I have even found teachers within my own school district. Each year has brought new penpals, and new topics for me though I have remained in the same first grade classroom.



I am Richard
I am 6 years old
I like fun
Will you write
to me?

10-6



Students can be encouraged to write to professional authors. Many authors will respond with a personal answer if children write individually to them. An entire class writing to one author usually will only get one class letter. Even authors who are too busy to respond will have their book companies send out biographical information and information about their latest books.

Several authors who have responded to my children's letters are:

Bill Martin, Jr. or Noodles the Ghost
Holt, Rinehart & Winston
383 Madison Ave.
New York, New York, 10017

Beverly Cleary
William Morrow and Company
105 Madison Avenue
New York, New York, 10016

Dr. Seuss
Random House, Inc.
201 East 50th St.
New York, New York, 10022

Natalie Babbitt
Farrar, Straus Girous, Inc.
19 Union Square West
New York, New York, 10003

Marjorie Sharmat
Macmillan Publishing Co.
866 Third Avenue
New York, New York, 10022

Children take letters home to get a stamp and then mail themselves.

LABELS

Labeling items in the classroom is beneficial provided that the children are involved in the process.

When the children visit on the teacher preparation day I make a name label with them just in case they bring a sweater or coat on the first day of school. They choose a hook in our hall area to be used during the school year. This labeling process extends to all their materials and supplies. I keep several permanent magic markers just for this purpose (They are only used with teacher supervision.)

Later, labeling can be extended to give directions or describe things:

Put lunchboxes here.

Put scraps in this box.

Labeling can be functional and fun. They are especially helpful if a child is just learning English. Most of the early reading and speaking that these children have done in my classroom have had labels as the

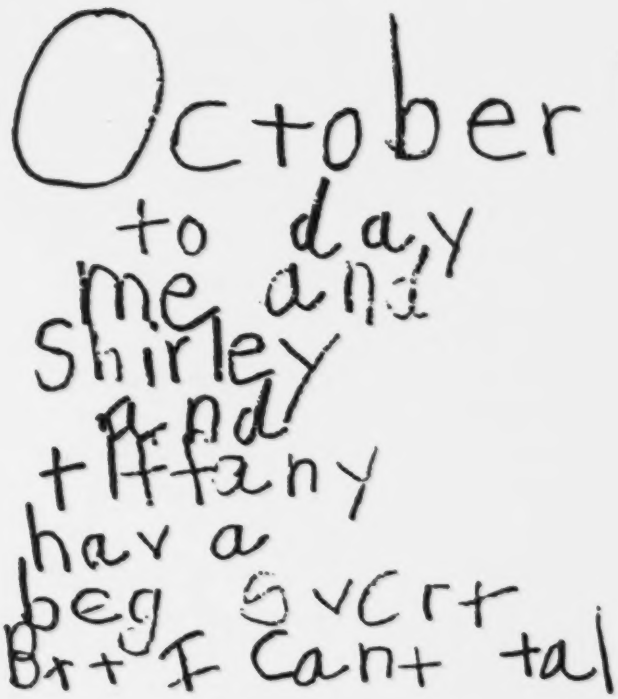
This is Greg's chair.

Look at the ceiling

JOURNALS

During the first week of school I give each child an 8½ x 11 spiral notebook to be used as a personal journal. This notebook keeps paper available to the child at all times, and can be used as the child wishes. Each day, I read it and respond in writing if appropriate. My responses are directed to the meaning, and I do not red-pencil or correct the child's writing. I ask the children to date each entry that they make, and often the children like to number the pages as they use the notebook. As soon as the entire notebook is finished, the child is allowed to take it home permanently.

Subjects vary. Holidays are a frequent choice, as well as things that children like. Some of the children use a diary form, while others use the pages for stories and poems. All the topics are those in which children have enough background and interest and in which they are able to communicate a thought.



Will you tell me someday? M.M.

At the beginning of the year, I often suggest that children write about things they like. I have a box of starter cards. They are approximately 8x10'' with magazine pictures accompanying the captions. Each has been covered with transparent contact paper or lamination film. Some of the captions are:

I like

I can

I know

I wish

I hope

If I were

In my car

On my bike

Other starters can be found in WISHES, LIES AND DREAMS by Kenneth Koch. Random House, 1970.

CLASS BOOKS

Books can be made to remember special happenings and occasions. These books might be about a trip or a special event in the classroom. When making a book like this, I discuss the subject with the children, and then dismiss them from the group when they have an idea. They must continue to listen from where ever they are working so that someone does not duplicate their idea. This way books do not end up with pages that are all alike. If the last few children have difficulty, I enlist help from the rest of the group again, and everyone is able to contribute a page.

Many books by professional authors have predictable portions which children can be encouraged to join in during the reading. Books like these also lend themselves well to children extending the author's pattern with ideas of their own.

After reading a book, discussing the pattern, and drawing out ideas I often put out a ditto with the open-ended pattern typed or written on it. Children may fill in their ideas and hand them in. As soon as I have enough pages I put them into a classbook. (I leave empty pages which can be filled in later as more children get new ideas.)

This is a contribution to a book which my class named IF I WASN,T ME. It is based on the book I LIKE TO BE ME, by Barbara Bel Geddes.

If I wasn't me, I would like to be

a HORSE ..... so I COd ..

RUN ..... FEST .....

by SUZIE.

The following books are a few that encourage young authoring:

HOW TO START A DAY, by Byrd Baylor, New York, Scribners, 1978.

This beautifully illustrated book will take a class to the American Southwest and around the world, as the author declares, "A morning needs to be sung to."

Have children think of the first thing they can remember that started their day. Record their thoughts, and put together a free verse collection.

Daddy singing
Amy yelling
The smell of coffee
A ring-ing-ing clock
The sun shining
The TV was on
Mama calling, "Get Up."

A HOUSE IS A HOUSE FOR ME, by Mary Ann Hoberman. New York, Viking, 1978.

Every type of home you can think of, and many others you probably never have are mentioned in this book. My first graders had fun trying to think of kinds of houses before I read the entire book to them.

Here are a few that they came up with that were not in Hoberman's book:

A cat is a house for a flea
A body is a house for a drop of blood
A coffin is a house for a vampire.

IF BOOKS

WHICH HORSE IS WILLIAM? by Karla Kuskin. New York, Harper and Row, 1959.

THE RUNAWAY BUNNY by Margaret Wise Brown. New York, Scholastic Books, 1942.

I LIKE TO BE ME by Barbara Bel Geddes. New York, Young Readers Press, 1963.

IF THE DINOSAURS CAME BACK, by Bernard Most. New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

Read any of these books, and let children guess what will happen. Develop innovations. ons.

As William turns into different animals, his mother can always tell who he is. Chris from my classroom said, "If I were a giraffe, I would still wear my Jolly Green Giant Pants."

The runaway bunny's mom always finds him. My class decided they would not get lost if they changed into something else. They said,

"I will be an egg," and then Miss Milz said,
"I will collect all the Easter eggs, and find you."

"I will be a lion in a cage." Then Miss Mllz said,
"I will be the lion tamer, and come in with you."

THE TEN LITTLE CATERPILLARS, by Bill Martin, Jr. New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970.

As you read books aloud, encourage children to anticipate the rhyming words as you read. As they discover the structure, they can write one of their own:

One day, as I looked in a tree---
Lots of birds were seen by me.
The first bird made a nest
  The second bird decided to rest.
The third bird laid an egg.
  The fourth bird hurt his leg.
The fifth bird climbed a tree.
  The sixth bird met a bee.
The seventh bird hunted for a worm
  The eighth bird started to squirm
The last bird said,
  "Oh boy it's Spring!
  It's a beautiful thing!"

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A POCKET? by Eve Merriman. New York, Knopf, 1964.

Ask about things one likes to put in a pocket. Do boys and girls put different things in their pockets? Write a pocket story. Use your own pattern.

If I had a _____in my pocket....
In my pocket I have_____.
With a_____ _____in my pocket.....

MERRY, MERRY FIBRUARY, By Doris Orgel. New York, Parents Magazine Press, 1977.

This nonsense book in rhyme is one to read during February. It can turn a dull winter day into an exciting one, and can give permission for a whole month of telling fabuluous fibs.

Next, imaginations can be turned loose with AND RAIN MAKES APPLESAUCE by Julian Sheer, or TO THINK THAT I SAW IT ON MULBERRY STREET by Dr. Seuss.

DEEP IN THE FOREST, by Brinton Turkle. New York, E.P. Dutton, 1976.

When this wordless picture book is put out, it is fun to watch the surprised faces as children discover a bear cub slipping into a person's home, instead of Goldilocks. The book will take readers back to the original Three Bears for comparison and provide a stimulus for children to try other variations on old familiar fairy tales.

What the child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow.

—Lev Vygotsky

STORY WRITING

If children are going to be young authors, it is important that they be exposed to the richness of children's literature every day. When reading to children, I often talk about the author and try to develop curiosity about who might have written the book and why. I begin to suggest that they might like to try to write a story themselves, and that the stories can be typed and put into blank books to be read by children in our classroom.

Children can create new adventures for favorite people found in iterature. Ramona, Fudgie, and Dorrie the Witch are just a few that children in my room have enjoyed.*

When Ramona took ice skating lessons. by caroline

the first day when Ramona went on the ice she fell down. she also was scared, but she was doing O.K. then a little while she fell down. And it was wet. ramona went to her mom and said, mommy I fell down." and I am all wet. so mrs. Quimby took ramona home. days and days went by. then the test came. she was more scared then ever! but she passed the test. she got 3 bages. her whole family was happy. even beezus!

*Cleary, Beverly. RAMONA THE BRAVE. SCHOLASTIC; Blume, Judy. TALES OF A 4th GRADE NOTHING. DELL YEARLING; Coombs, Patricia, DORRIE AND THE BLUE WITCH. Young Readers Press.

November 1978

fudgie goes to mars

Jennifer Campbell
2nd Grade

ome day
fudgie went
to see a space.
Ship Blast off
were it was just
abot to Blast
off fugie sied
no go no go
and ran out
off the
Bilding.

and ran into
the space Ship.
He pret a
fue Buttins
and up in to the
air The
Space Ship went.
it went up and up
and the Began
to see planets
like Jopater
and plants
like tate.

pudarle He
landid
with a Big
crake!
fudgie Run
a rad Baton
He prast it
the hac opend
Back at the
Bilding they
side Inside

~~Mellet writet~~ the

fudgie out
Ride the LeRAR
Rarking
the plas
aQ you know
fudgie is very
gurcis.

can you Her
ue fudgie He
Codent Her thm
Beas He was
out eid
will cim clad
~~the~~ captan tue
are storc:n
fudgie has a ~~bar~~ friend

AS He was
wlkeing a rowind
He saow a marson
~~He sit~~ fadie
said mack friud
mack friud so
He wlet up
To the Marcho
and said will n
you Be my friud

yes seid The.
marshcon

come in my
spas shipOK
of Fuggie
fdie

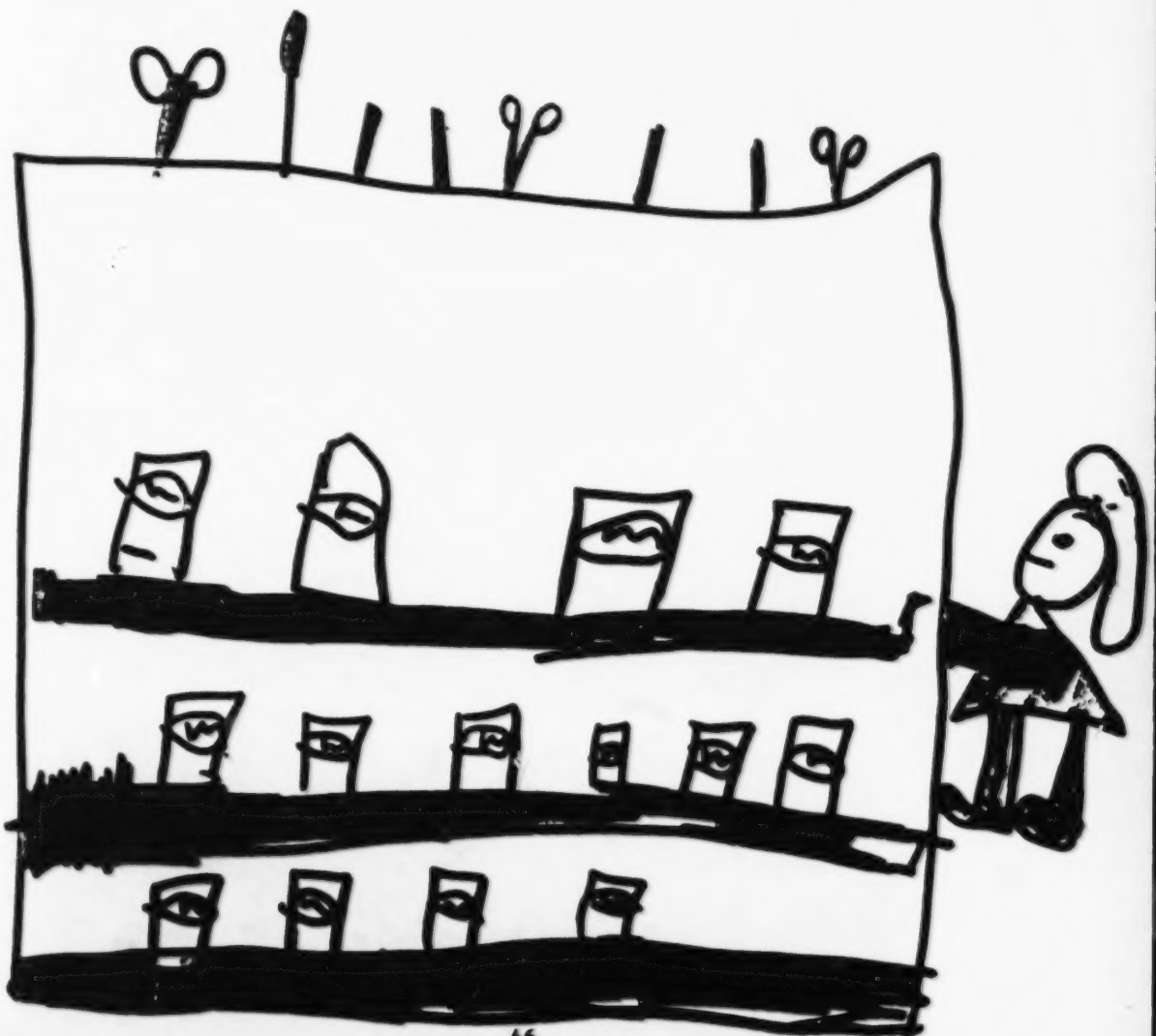
Ho nos maBe
fudgie ma. Be
on a noter
planit.

The
End

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Along with reading professional books, I show my class copies of books made by children in my previous classes. As I read these books, I tell how a particular child got an idea, and put it into a story--sometimes even showing a rough draft if it wasn't discarded. Once one child writes a story to be published, the class is on their way and many children begin to write stories on their own choices of topic.

To be ready for my young writers, I keep a supply of blank books on hand. I usually meet with parents and get them to help me make them. After a child writes a story, we have a conference to discuss it, and the story is typed. The author illustrates it if they wish, and it becomes part of our classroom library.



BOOKMAKING

Students write or dictate a manuscript. After the first writing is complete, have the child read the manuscript to you. Then, help to edit for publication. Offer suggestions by skilled questioning which does not in any way destroy or diminish the author's pride in the product.

Discuss placement of text, and where illustrations will go in the book.

Type the manuscript. Work within margins of 5". State author's name, grade, school, and date written on title page. Include dedications and table of contents, if the child wishes.

Make the cover:

a. Cut two pieces of cardboard (6 x 9).

b. Cut contact paper or wallpaper fabric with dry mount or cleaner bags (14 x 11).

c. Adhere b. to cardboard. Leave ¼" between cardboards, or the book will not close. Mitre corners. Cut off a triangle of contact paper, or fold corners in if it is fabric or wallpaper. Fold side edges in. Paste the triangles of contact paper over the four corners to reinforce. Set aside.

Make the pages:

a. Stack 6 - 10 pages of 8½ x 11 ditto paper. Fold in half.

b. Sew down the middle. This can be done by machine (largest stitch available) or by hand (punch an uneven number of holes--start in the middle from the back, and go in and out).

c. paste end sheets to the cover you made previously.

Finishing up:

a. Cut text apart, and paste in book.

b. have the student make the illustrations. Iron to set the crayon and smooth the sheets. (Just face the illustration down on old newspaper and use a low temperature to iron.) Cut to 5 x 7. Paste in book.

c. Put title on cover. The author's name can be added.

Read and share the new book. Enjoy the pleasure of publishing a book with a young author!!!

TECHNIQUES

"She starts by getting this message across to the kids in her room about spelling, 'your judgment is good. Trust it. Figure out how the word sounds to you and write it down that way.' Along with that kind of confidence, she provides her children with a bucketful of wooden and plastic letters, a diary (one for each child) and many reasons to write."

—Carol Chomsky observing
a first grade teacher.

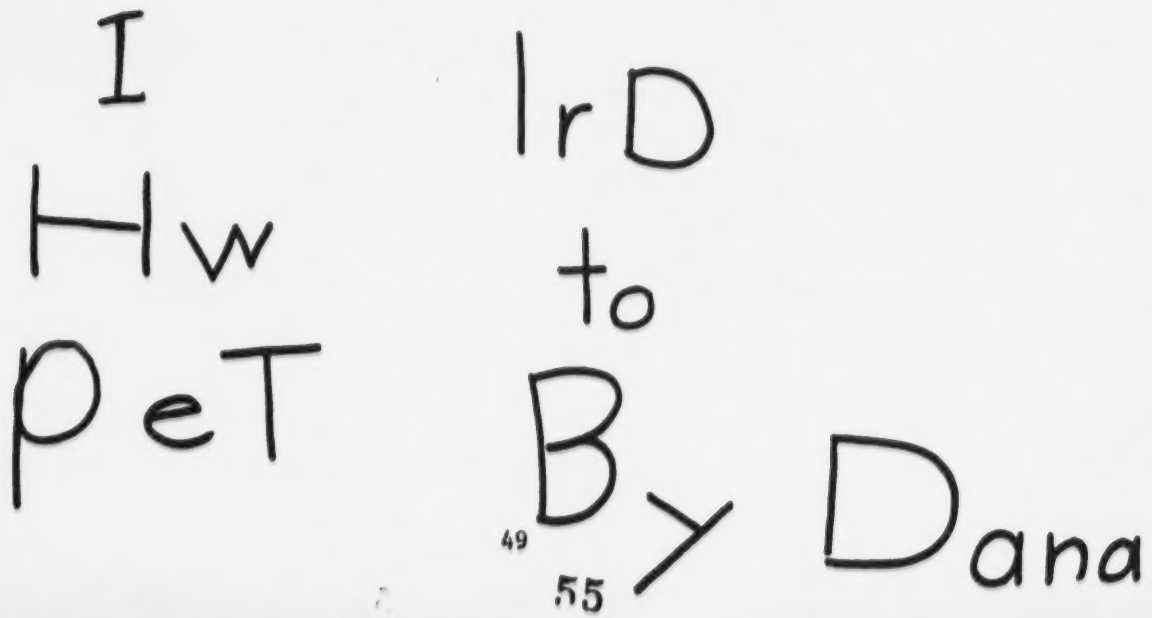
SUPPORT

As children become aware of the usefulness and meaning of print, their desire to write by themselves begins to grow. I answer questions if a child asks me how to write a word. Gradually, I turn the question back to the child by asking, "How would you write it?" Sometimes I put the adult spelling next to a generated one, if the child wants to make the comparison.

Children begin to put down remembered word forms, and generate words as they discover relationships and principles of spelling. As they construct and revise rules, their spelling can be called **invented spelling**. I do not correct each word, for when children first begin to write, it is important that they find success in their first attempts to communicate. Teachers need to be aware of what is happening, and be able to encourage and support the effort. The greatest way to get a child to try again is to be able to read the intended message the young writer sent. From the time they first write, each child intends to represent meaning. Marie Clay describes the typical beginning writer:

> "The first things learned will be gross approximations which later become refined, weird letter forms, invented words, make-believe sentences."

Understanding this statement, and sharing a classroom with my young writers, it is easy for me to get meaning from Dana's message to me:



He tells me, "I learned how to print." Dana is at the start of his spelling career. His first attempts are similar to other first graders, and related to the adult spelling he will eventually use. He shows an awareness of phonetic acuity with his letter choices, and does not put down random letters to represent his words. His most important goal right now is to get a thought into written form.

If Dana continues to write, and receives support from understanding recepients his spelling will continue to develop and his spellings will become more conventional. Researchers, such as Glenda Bissex, are noting that spellings evolve through a whole series of changes.

DICTATION

If children are asking questions of every word, and still lack confidence in their ability, I will take dictation. To do this, I ask the child to dictate a brief statement that they want recorded. Then I write it for them and read it with them. A space is left underneath for the child to copy the written statement. I suggest that they erase my "helper words" and re-read what they have written themselves. Dictation can be done on art work, or in the journal.

WRITTEN CONVERSATIONS

The technique of Written Conversation can also be helpful in getting children to take the first step in writing. This procedure was developed by Carolyn Burke of Indiana University.

I simply write a short message, and read it aloud as I hand it to the child. I then give them the paper and pencil for a response. If a child tells me I can't write, I ask the child to pretend, and tell me what he/she wants to say. Very few children write nothing, and usually they write a lot:

Teacher:	Hi
Child:	Hi
Teacher:	I am MIss Milz
Child:	I am Dana
Teacher:	I like Room 14
Child:	I lk U

EVALUATION

A developmental writing method assumes that all writing, no matter how incoherent or how incomplete it appears, does represent an attempt at communication, an attempt that must be treated with respect.

—Elizabeth McPherson

Writing is difficult to test. Fortunately, it is not hard to evaluate if the evaluator keeps several principles in mind:

1. It must be continuous.
2. It must be based on actual writing.
3. It must involve self-evalution.
4. It should help the learner to grow and develop.

To accomplish the above, samples should be kept of writing done by each student over a year's time, and even from year to year. Writing folders can be made, and samples inserted weekly or monthly. The journal provides a daily record very naturally, and provides interesting information if the reader goes back several months.

As children look at their writing over a period of time, they can note their progress by comparing samples from different times. Parents can be shown the progress. Teachers can determine strengths and weaknesses which can be the focus of teacher/student conferences. Don Graves outlines a conference approach to assist developing writers:

> "In a school whose teachers follow the process-conference approach, a teacher might think, "Jennifer is ready for quotation marks in her writing now." Jennifer will meet quotation marks when dealing with the conversation of characters in the story she is writing. She will look for models from literature. "See, this is how an author shows people are talking. You put marks here and here. Now your knight is talking."

Research in child language development suggests errors are not random, but indicate that children are learning language and applying their knowledge. They reveal how children are reaching out and organizing new information in relation to the foundation they already have. The more that I observe children writing, the more I believe that children have a reason for whatever they do. As I read their early messages, I am confident that these young writers will become more proficient, and be able to communicate their ideas in printed form. Their beginnings will form a solid base for the future.

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PROGRAM IN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

The Program in Language and Literacy is an innovative effort to provide a center for activities dedicated to better knowledge of development in language and literacy and more effective school practice. The program is concerned with language processes as well as learning and teaching of language.

Program activities have several main concentrations:

- Research on oral and written language:
  - on written language processes
  - on development of oral and written language.
  - on teaching for effective use of oral and written language.
  - on curriculum for language growth and use.
  - on bilingual, bicultural, biliterate development and instruction.
  - on issues in adult basic literacy.
- Theory development in oral and written language processes.
- Whole language teaching and learning.
- Curriculum development and methodology for monolingual and bilingual programs.
- Language and literacy components in pre-service teacher education programs.
- In-service language and literacy programs for teachers, curriculum workers and administrators
- In-service and post-doctoral programs for teacher educators.
- Consultation to school systems and other education agencies to plan and evaluate language and literacy programs.
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